ASSOCIATION FOR PRACTICAL AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS KEYNOTE ADDRESS, MARCH 2011

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INTRODUCTION

In 1991, the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics (APPE) was founded. Its mission was to promote high quality scholarship and teaching in practical and professional ethics. The audience was to be across academic disciplines and across professions (and, by implication, across cultures). In effect it was an effort to bring together ethicists and non ethicists, professionals and non professionals to think about practical and professional ethics and combine that with work on ethics education for these areas. It has been a remarkably bold experiment. Indeed, it may have been more remarkable than the founders realized, and an experiment in a way not quite anticipated by the founders.

Speaking of the founders, I want to especially acknowledge two of the original Board members. David H. Smith played an absolutely crucial role in the foundation of the Association. It was he who secured a Lilly Endowment gift to start up the Association. It was he who secured the agreement with Indiana University to host the Association, and it was he who was there in the struggling years to provide financial support from the Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions as well as sage advice in those formative years.

I also want to acknowledge Dennis F. Thompson, another founding Board member, for his central role in starting the Association. He was a major impetus in suggesting that the time had come for such an association, encouraging his high-visibility colleagues to participate, and providing extremely wise counsel and support on the Board through the formative years.

This year we celebrate that Twentieth Anniversary. Here at the 2011 Annual Meeting, there will be some special retrospective/prospective sessions reflecting on specific issues in practical and professional ethics.
This morning I would like to spend a few minutes reflecting more broadly on the Association, who we are, where we have been the past twenty years, and perhaps where we might go.

We held our first meeting in Indianapolis. I was understandably apprehensive. On the first morning of the Annual Meeting, I rounded a corner to the meeting rooms, encountered a striking display and realized that we were sharing the meeting space with a convention of Casket Manufacturers. It gave me pause. However, their display was really inviting…so I made notes for our Book Room display.

WHO ARE WE?

Uniqueness:

In the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics we are trying to do something unique. It is not just an academic association, nor a disciplinary association. It is not just an association for professional ethics in a particular field, such as business or bioethics. It is not just an association focusing on ethics education. It is intentionally cross-disciplinary and cross-professional. It is intentionally a community that allows us to learn from one another, across disciplinary and professional boundaries, regarding the nature of practical ethics, normative concepts and forms of ethical justification that can be invoked across practices as well as new ideas and techniques in pedagogical practice. It aspires to create an ongoing community that allows sustained work over time in practical and professional ethics—encouraging members to come back year after year to share their developing work with a family of learners. We have actually seen that nurturing of sustained work over time, scholarly work at the Annual Meeting in its early form: a paper or series of papers in successive Annual Meetings, and then we have seen that work come to fruition as a book discussed in the Author Meets the Critics session or Lunch with an Author.

In recent history, no one else had attempted the breadth of cross-disciplinary and cross-professional focus on practical and professional ethics to which the Association has aspired. The notion of practical ethics emerged in the 1960s and 70s, in the decades before the founding of the Association. The Society for Business Ethics and the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities and its antecedents reflect that development and predate our Association. They are important societies, but their focus is narrower. They each deal with subsets of issues in
practical ethics and we can learn much from them. However, we cast a broader net.

The Value of Cross-Professional Dialogue:

The development of specialized associations in professional ethics such as medicine, journalism and business and so on can, on the one hand, be valuable. That specialization can result in important work—clarifying moral concepts, extending the limits of justifying considerations for that profession. On the other hand, that development runs the danger of the balkanization of practical ethics and the development of insular thinking that can lead to a kind of moral myopia. Specialization in practical ethics can lead to disciplinary blindness.

I once reviewed an article for a medical ethics journal on ethical issues in managed care. The hypothesis was that physicians in managed care organizations would face an ethical problem, specifically an ethical conflict of interest between the patient’s interests and those of the managed care organization. The authors, including a well known medical ethicist, concluded with relief that there was no ethical problem because there was no conflict of interest for the physicians, merely a perception of conflict of interest on the part of patients. I pointed out that if the authors had been reading the literature in government ethics they would not be so quick to dismiss appearances of conflict of interest as an ethical issue.

What is unique about the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics is that its membership encompasses a much broader range of disciplinary training and practical and professional experience than does the membership of the American Philosophical Association, the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities, the Society for Business Ethics, or the Society for Christian Ethics.

Some disciplinary associations such as the American Philosophical Association have of course always included a focus on ethics, although only from the perspective of that discipline, not other disciplines and not so much practical and professional ethics. These associations certainly have not included non philosophers or a broad range of professionals to any significant degree, unlike our Association.

It is true that some professions have historically included a focus on the ethics of their own profession. Other professionals and practitioners have only recently focused on the ethics of their own practice, often only on a code of ethics and not particularly on the ethical underpinnings of a code or the ethical reasoning involved. The professions have sometimes
developed their own codes and views of professional ethics largely in ignorance of those of other professions and practices. Some practitioners and professionals have been slow to even see the legitimacy of the role of ethics in their practice or profession. (I highlight, in particular, academics themselves. Over the past twenty years we have had at most two or three papers on the Annual Meeting program focusing on the ethics of faculty responsibility or faculty behavior. We have been very good talking about the ethics of other professions—about our own, not so much.) Finally, very few disciplines or professions, if any, have embraced the inclusion of teaching practical ethics as part of their focus on professional ethics.

**A Word About Our Name:**

The choice of the term “Practical Ethics” for the Association was deliberate. There was a conscious effort to distinguish it from “Applied Ethics.” The expressions “Practical Ethics” and “Applied Ethics” are sometimes used interchangeably, and indeed some of the members in this audience have programs invoking the term “Applied Ethics.”

The term “Applied Ethics” conjured up for many ethicists a failed effort in the 1970s to apply ethical principles or theories directly to practical problems in the professions. The attempt, broadly speaking, was a kind of “moral geometry.” The idea was that particular solutions to ethical problems can be deduced directly from first principles. Michael Davis calls it a “Cartesian conception of ethics made practical, practical ethics as an essentially deductive enterprise.”

It was only in the last third of the 20th century, when ethicists actually tried to bring ethical theory to bear on practical problems, that the deficiency of this sort of “Applied Ethics” became apparent. John Arras, one of our members, recalled that, as an ethicist coming out of graduate school in the 1970s, when he actually tried to use this approach in medical ethics in a hospital, the approach simply did not work for a variety of reasons. It could not take account of the context of the practice under consideration; it did not yield determinate ethical guidance for specific action steps.

It is fair to say that our Association rejected the notion of “Applied Ethics,” and recognized in the absence of that model, the need for some form of systematic moral reasoning; for taking ground level experience into account; and a means for making decisions for action. Just what ought to be the relation between “principles” at any level, first-hand experience, and decisions for morally justified practical actions are still contested issues. Indeed, at this year’s Annual Meeting there will be an
important panel by some of our leading members that addresses issue of
moral reasoning. I do not propose to explicate or resolve those issues
today.

The use of “Applied Ethics” can also have misleading implications
for pedagogy. It is natural to suppose that, on that model, one ought to
begin by teaching ethical theory or theoretical principles and then use
deductive reasoning to apply the theory to practical problems.

I have suggested elsewhere, that the term “applied ethics” can be
particularly misleading to engineers and scientists, conjuring up the
model of applied mathematics. To those with that disciplinary
background, the term can initially create inappropriate expectations
regarding: the relation of ethical theory to practice; the kind of reasoning
involved; the kind of intellectual rigour involved; the kinds of solutions to
be expected in practical ethics as well as the sort of pedagogy appropriate
for teaching practical ethics. We have seen that in our work on the
Graduate Research Ethics Education project as well as in our work in the
Responsible Conduct of Research Ethics Education Committee projects
over the years.

Henry Sidgwick:

There is an echo of our aspirations from the end of the 19th
Century. The first volume that the Association published in its Oxford
Series on Practical and Professional Ethics was Practical Ethics: A Collection of
Essays and Addresses by Henry Sidgwick, the 19th century British ethicist.
This set of essays, first published in 1889, mainly contains his addresses
to members of the Cambridge Ethical Society and the London Ethics
Society; societies which he helped found in the 1880s. Early in the
Association, we actually had a panel of our members explore Sidgwick’s
views; they took Sidgwick’s ideas on practical ethics and middle axioms
to task in different ways. The papers were published in the International
Journal of Applied Philosophy. Recently, a Sidgwick scholar has revisited the
work of that panel, and defends Sidgwick against the critics. This is an
early example of the role the Association has played in the development
of scholarship in practical ethics. I want to reflect on three observations
from Sidgwick in his essays, regarding the composition of the societies,
their aims, and the need for civility in those groups.

Composition of Sidgwick’s Ethical Societies:

As Sidgwick notes, these societies were composed of: “many
members whose intellectual habits as well as aims are practical rather
than speculative;” “[The societies engaged in] ethical discussions having a distinctly practical aim carried on among a miscellaneous group of educated persons who do not belong exclusively to one religious group or philosophical school and possibly may not have gone through any systematic study of philosophy.”5 The ethical societies invited “the cooperation of all thoughtful persons whether experts in philosophy or not.”6

**Aim of Ethical Societies:**

The aim of the ethical societies, he claims, “is not knowledge but action;” the aim is to “reach some result of value for the practical guidance in life;” once we recognize this “practical object, it is not equally necessary that we should get to the bottom of things” that is, arriving at agreement on first principles.7 We should, he argues, aim to get “to results which may be really of use in the solution of practical questions; and yet not endeavoring to penetrate to ultimate principles on which we can hardly hope to come to rational agreement in the present state of philosophical thought. We must remain as far as possible in the “region of middle axioms.”8

At first blush, we may recognize our own Association in Sidgwick's description of the makeup of his ethical societies and their aims. However, just what Sidgwick means by “Practical Ethics” and middle axioms and how he sees these middle axioms advancing the solution of practical ethical issues are contested issues among scholars, including some in the audience today. Nevertheless, some of Sidgwick’s observations are still relevant to the Association.

**Solving Practical Moral Problems:**

Sidgwick’s distinction between the aims of action and knowledge is central to practical ethics. One way of thinking about Sidgwick’s distinction between action and knowledge is to think about the task of the practitioner engaged in practical ethics when a person recognizes that he or she is faced with the question, “What, morally speaking, should I do in this situation?” Answering that question is a central and distinctive task of the practitioner engaged in practical ethics. This is to raise the moral question of action from a particular perspective, namely that of the moral agent involved in the situation.

Stuart Hampshire distinguished that task of the practitioner as moral agent from that of the moral judge.9 The moral agent, unlike the judge,
must fashion a solution in order to solve a moral problem in a practice and get on with the practice. The task is to come up with a solution that allows the agent to conduct the practice in an ethical manner.\textsuperscript{10}

As a matter of practical ethics, there may be conflicts between competing moral considerations, with no clear priority of values or moral principles involved. There may also be competing legitimate legal, prudential, social, and technical considerations as well. A justified solution may involve compromise, arbitration, negotiation, or reconciliation processes as well as reasoning about the moral considerations. The process is intended to devise a moral solution that meets as many constraints as possible—not a determinate solution, not a deductive process from first principles. Practical ethical decisions for action must also often be made under constraints of time and imperfect information.\textsuperscript{11}

Practical Ethics:

I shall use the term practical ethics to “refer to efforts to bring ethical considerations and deliberation to bear on practical moral problems that arise in practical activity at the level of individual and collective actions in practice, including professional practice as well as the larger, more general practices of a society.”\textsuperscript{12} The expression in this sense is, I think, neutral with respect to exactly how ethical considerations are brought to bear. Exactly what is the correct account of that process continues to be controversial among ethicists.

Why Ethicists and Practitioners Need Each Other:

One implication of the nature of practical ethics is that ethicists and practitioners need each other, and that has implications for the composition of the Association. Sidgwick describes his Ethical Societies as composed of persons from two distinct backgrounds. On the one hand were those formally trained in ethics and on the other, what he calls practical persons, “plain, honest” persons from all walks and stations of life, including but not limited to professionals, religious leaders, government officials, academics, really all citizens who have in common a concern about ethics in their practice but no formal training in ethics.

Two Types of Plain, Honest Persons:

In the category of practical persons, Sidgwick distinguished two types of plain, honest persons that are still relevant to our Association.
On the one hand, there are many plain, honest persons who really do think that they always know what their duty is. Echoing Bishop Butler, they need only to ask themselves, “Is this I am going about right or wrong?,” and they are convinced they will get it right as long as they do not confuse their moral sense by listening to bad philosophy. Sidgwick observes that, in his opinion, these persons are to some extent, “Under an illusion and really know less than they think.”

As we have reached out to practitioners over the last twenty years, we have indeed encountered plain, honest persons in this category, including academics in various disciplines, professionals in various fields, as well as persons in other walks of life who are genuinely puzzled by what ethicists could possibly have to offer them. Sometimes they have attended our Annual Meeting or other Association functions and made presentations with the expectation that they will enlighten us but will have nothing to learn from us, and they leave with the same conviction, never to return. Now the teacher in me wants to say that if only we could spend more time in dialogue they would change their view, but sometimes that is not in the cards.

On the other hand, Sidgwick observes, there is a second category of plain, honest practitioners, again including academics, professionals, and those in other walks of life. Namely, those whose reflections have made them aware that “in their individual efforts after right living they have had to grope and stumble, along an imperfectly lit path. Experience has shown them the uncertainty, confusions, contradictions in current ideals of what is right and that such standards are liable to limitations and imperfections.” These people have a strong motivation to engage in dialogue, seeking answers to practical ethical problems.

We have been blessed in the Association with practitioners from all walks of life who fit Sidgwick’s second category of plain, honest practitioners, and who have become involved in the Association. Colleagues in social work, journalism, and medicine, for example, have repeatedly remarked to me that what they find here in our Association which they cannot find in their own disciplinary meetings is that dialogue with ethicists and those in other professions to help them think about their own area.

Michael Davis has observed: “…there is no problem about finding a role for practitioners in an association like APPE. APPE is a forum for formulating, evaluating and interpreting special rules of conduct, a forum useful to practitioners in a way most professional associations are not
because APPE, unlike most others, has a good number of philosophers and members of other professions available to help."

One of our members, a social worker, contacted me last summer after he had lost everything in a flood. The thing he missed most, he said, was the loss of his good-sized library in professional ethics. Not formally educated in ethics, he cherished that collection, singling out Bernie Gert’s *Common Morality* as a special favorite. For him the Association has been a special place to connect with ethicists and other practitioners.

**Why Ethicists Need Practitioners:**

Sidgwick does make some observations regarding the mix of members in his ethical societies that are relevant to the Association. He suggests that there is much to be said for an ethical society which contains more than ethicists and why Ethicists (philosophers) need Practitioners (nonphilosophers). He argues: that the [ethicists] are not likely to have all the requisite facts in order to determine “the duties of any particular station of life.” The [ethicists’] grasp of the facts “are not to be trusted unless aided, checked and controlled by the moral judgments of those with less philosophy but more special experience.”

[Ethicists] “can only learn from others the facts that they have consciously observed and remembered”; “but there is an important element in the experience of persons…which finds no place in any statement of facts…It is only represented in their judgments of what ought to be done and aimed at.” “…[I]t is a common observation that the judgments of practical men as to what ought to be done in particular circumstances are often far sounder than the reasons they give for them.” “The judgments represent the result of experience unconsciously imbibed.”

More specifically, Sidgwick thinks: “[Ethicists] should study with reverent and patient care the moral judgments—especially the spontaneous, unreflective judgments on particular cases of those persons to be found in all walks and stations of life whose earnest and predominant aim is to do their duty. …Such persons are to be found in the thick and heat of the struggle of active life—in all stations and ranks. It is to their judgments on duties of their station that moral philosophers should pay attention…” Their experience has given them an intuitive, even if unarticulated sense, of some of the moral landscape that the ethicist may not detect, as well as tacit knowledge of legal, prudential, social and technical considerations that bear on the ethical decision making.
I have argued elsewhere, for example, that if Irish villagers who have become the unwitting subjects of a social science observational study are morally outraged by what they perceive to be a violation of their privacy, then even though, by current conceptions of privacy and ethical standards of privacy, nothing wrong has been done to them, the ethicist and social science researchers had better pay very careful attention—give their moral judgment “reverent attention” and rethink conventional concepts of privacy.21

Or, to take another example: if a Native American or an Amish group’s practice on decision making processes does not conform with the assumptions of current research science procedures for informed and voluntary consent, then that may mean that research ethicists need to rethink the notion of informed, voluntary consent.

Composition of the Association:

Problems of practical ethics often cut across boundaries, as do their solutions. The solution of practical ethical problems may involve compromise. Practical ethics is an activity rather than a discipline and one that necessarily crosses the boundary between theory and practice; between disciplines; between professions; between methodologies; between professional roles and general morality; between ethical decision-making at the individual level and ethical decision-making in the institutional context. It necessarily crosses political boundaries within societies as well as across societies. Thus, it is because of the nature of practical ethics that it is essential that as an Association, we cross such boundaries.

Whether in a university setting or a profession or society as a whole, there is a tremendous impetus towards specialization of social units. The Association’s crossing of boundaries runs against the cultural grain at every level and presents a unique challenge for our Association. From the earliest meetings we have engaged professionals and practitioners from journalism, engineering, medicine, corporate business and, perhaps surprisingly, the military. We have included architects, social workers, CIA agents, school teachers, administrators, state legislators and legislative ethics groups, computer scientists, geographers, archaeologists, anthropologists, and public health officials.

The range of academic disciplines represented in the membership over the years has been very wide: Philosophy, Religious Studies, Business, Management, Accounting, History, Law, Social Work,
Medicine, Nursing, Journalism, and virtually all the sciences and engineering.

One way in which we departed from Sidgwick, even from the first meeting, is in inclusion of participants from other countries and cultures. At our first (several) meetings we had participants from Japan, Norway, Israel, Spain, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Denmark. This year we welcome colleagues from Australia, Japan, Canada, China, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom. Since its founding the Association has had 150 individual members from 30 foreign countries, representing 55 universities outside the United States.

Collaboration Between Practitioners and Ethicists:

Throughout the Association’s history, we have tried to facilitate collaboration between practitioners and ethicists both on specific ethical issues of a practice as well as ethics education in that practice. Early on this collaboration included special programming for the Annual Meeting in journalism and engineering, the military (Australian and Canadian Defence Forces), and a number of corporations such as Motorola which was trying to develop ethics education programs for its own company employees. There were others such participants, Arthur Anderson for example, which was developing ethics education programs for corporations. (That latter effort by Arthur Anderson did not work out so well.)

We conducted collaborative workshops with practitioners, for example, with the U.S. Office of Government Ethics, trying to identify ways an ethicist might be involved in ethics education for government employees.

In 1996 we developed a two day national conference in Jacksonville, Florida: Ethical Issues in Managed Care. The aim was to bring together physicians, nurses, social workers, hospital administrators, insurance companies, and administrators of managed care programs to address the issues of resources, rationing, and responsibility in health care.

It was an eye-opening experience. Hospital and insurance administrators called to ask who would be at the conference. It turned out what they meant was, “Would physicians and nurses be present?” Similarly physicians called to see if administrators would be present. Some suggested that if the other groups were present, they would not come. The level of animosity between the three sides was startling. It was also clear that there was no forum in which these groups with different perspectives on health care could discuss their views.
One physician from Georgia called to ask who “owned” the Association. I was confused. I finally understood that he was asking which corporations were underwriting the conference and perhaps the Association. As he finally put it, “As soon as you tell me who is underwriting this conference and your association, I will tell you what the agenda of the conference will be.” When I told him that no one “owned” the Association, it was his turn to be confused. He did not believe me initially, it was so foreign to his experience. That experience underscored the importance of the Association maintaining intellectual independence, and this reinforced the importance of being very careful about accepting support from those with an agenda. Even though the temptation is strong to secure such financial support, we have continued that approach to this day.

In later years we have worked with social workers and the National Association of Social Workers. We have encouraged collaboration on codes of ethics between ethicists and archaeologists, anthropologists, architects, and even geographers and computer scientists involved in development of Geographical Information Systems. We have provided programming that involved pairing CIA agents with ethicists. More recently, we have nurtured work on the ethical guidelines for the development and deployment of pervasive and autonomous information technology. We have for some time been nurturing the collaboration between scientists and engineers and ethicists on ethical issues in research and the teaching of research ethics.

A Word on Civility:

Dennis Thompson notes that, given the nature of practical ethics, practical ethics must be thought of as political. People can reasonably disagree about many practical ethical issues, therefore, the distinction between the right decision and the right to make a decision is significant in practical ethics. One cannot avoid the question of who should decide. Practical ethics has to provide principles for resolving or at least accommodating such disagreement. Thompson argues that this is not a matter of choosing a procedure (majority rule/informed consent/shareholder proxies). It is more illuminating to think of it as a process of deliberation. The way people interact/relate is as important as the question of “who” should decide. That is to say, civility counts.

I have suggested why the nature of practical ethics implies the need for collaboration between ethicists and practitioners and hence a forum for such collaboration. One implication of collaborative work between
academics and practitioners and across professions and disciplines, is the need for dialogue and, I would argue, sustained dialogue requires a habit of civility in discourse.

I have argued elsewhere that civility is an essential ingredient in the university; faculty members have a moral responsibility to act as trustees for a community of learners and more specifically to help create and maintain a culture that will sustain a community of learners, including an atmosphere of civility, respect for persons, and respect for the truth required in reasonable debate of highly charged social issues.

Civility is an essential virtue in an intellectual discussion and in teaching. The most aggressive proponent in a discussion may get his or her views the most air time, but that is no guarantee that the arguments are sound. Incivility runs the danger of suppressing better arguments or important perspectives. The net result of uncivil debate may well be to end discourse. I am fully aware this is a view not shared by all my academic colleagues. Some would say that civility in the academy in general and in academic discussions in particular is a nice but not necessary trait. Some would even say that civility is an impediment to the search for truth.

That need for a habit of civility in a group such as ours including both academics and non academics is even greater. The challenge of maintaining a habit of civility in an association such as ours is compounded by a not uncommon habit or characteristic of those of us trained in philosophy who, as Sidgwick puts it, “have a bad habit of arguing in an exasperated tone as if each have suffered a personal injury through the publication of views opposed to their own.” I confess that I was surprised by Sidgwick’s description of his philosophical colleagues more than a century ago. I assumed that my own socialization into philosophy in graduate school as armed combat was the result of the more recent development of analytic philosophy.

We have been blessed in the Association to have so many trained in ethics who have always grasped the need for collegiality. I admit that over the years I have pulled aside a few members who did not, and suggested to them that we do not conduct ourselves that way in this Association. I believe that we are perceived as an association that is open and welcoming to various perspectives and approaches to ethics, and I believe that is essential to the success of the Association.

In practical ethics, ethicists have as much to learn from practitioners and professionals as the other way around. The value of a forum for persons across disciplines and across professions is that it can facilitate
the great deal that we have to teach each other. To engage in such
dialogue, civility is essential.

Connection to Ethics BowlSM:

Moral discussion and debate in American society has been hijacked
by the infotainment industry, certain religious groups, and the marketing
techniques of campaign managers and political extremists. The
demonizing of opponents in particular, is significantly affecting our
capacity to govern. It seems to me all the more essential that we stress
conditioning of the next generation for civil debate and modeling of
civility in such discussions. Rhetoric has always had a role in political
discussion and it is often intended to inflame the passions. If that is
insufficiently balanced by restraint in discussion, democratic deliberation
in our pluralistic society will be derailed.

I believe that one of the important features of Ethics BowlSM is not
only that it helps students recognize and reason about ethical issues but
also it can help them learn to do so with civility. I am pleased to see our
colleague Bob Ladenson writing on just that issue.

Civility in discussion requires a capacity to understand and take
seriously the views of opponents and to provide reasoned responses in a
genuine ethical deliberation. Competition is compatible with civility—but
if we let the Ethics BowlSM deteriorate into a mere forensics competition,
without reasoned responses in a genuine ethical dialogue, then we lose a
golden opportunity.

WHAT HAVE WE ACCOMPLISHED IN THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS?

We have created a cross-disciplinary and cross-professional forum
that did not exist previously for work on practical and professional ethics
across disciplines and across professional boundaries and for nurturing
collaboration between practitioners and ethicists. The significance of this
should not be underestimated. The impetus towards specialization in
scholarship and professional work is enormous. It is reinforced by
narrow education and rewarded by career prestige and status. We have
truly been swimming against the current.

We have created a locus for the nurturing of Ethics Centers, where
none existed before. Ethics Centers on college and university campuses
can be a very important force for ethics education of administrators,
faculty and students and on the university curriculum, as well as a force
for outreach in the larger community. Universities and colleges continue
to develop such centers and look for guidance for that process; others
struggle to keep their centers viable. All can learn from each other.

We have created a place to encourage the next generation of
practical ethicists. Very early in the Association, we instituted a
competition at the Annual Meeting for undergraduate and graduate
papers, and paid the registrations for those whose papers were accepted
(usually 20-30 graduate papers, 2-10 undergraduate papers). To
encourage scholarship in practical and professional ethics, we have
recently established cash prize awards for best papers for early career
scholars and graduate students, and we arranged with the *International
Journal of Applied Philosophy* to consider several of the winning papers each
year for publication. In 2004, we launched an Annual Drive, in part to
provide funds to pay for the registrations and prizes. Last year, in
response to a challenge grant from Marc A.T. Muskavitch, we mounted a
special campaign to endow a cash prize for the best graduate paper, in
memory of Karen M.T. Muskavitch, a biologist who was a long term
member of the Association and GREE project faculty member. For the
last several years we have been fortunate to have the Squire Family
Foundation award a cash prize for the best paper on pre-college ethics.

From the very first meeting we provided a forum for ethics
education for academics and practitioners, including a focus on Ethics
Across the Curriculum. Many important teaching initiatives have been
shared over the years and have provided the opportunity for all of us to
learn teaching techniques and ideas from those in other disciplines and
professions; an opportunity that, absent the Association, would not oth-
erwise have been available. I want to mention four specific activities or
projects in ethics education.

**Graduate Student Seminar on Teaching Ethics**

For many years we have offered a graduate student seminar on
teaching ethics at the Annual Meeting. This seminar has brought together
graduate students from across disciplines for a half day discussion of
objectives and techniques in teaching practical ethics. It has been led,
with rave reviews, in the first years by Martin Benjamin and Rick
Momeyer and in later years by Rick Momeyer.

**Ethics BowlSM**

It is not an accident that the National Intercollegiate Ethics BowlSM
emerged from our Association rather than the American Philosophical
Association or some other organization. Our understanding of practical ethics as well as our commitment to ethics education in all forms made it natural for us to welcome and nurture the Ethics Bowl\textsuperscript{SM}.

At our Fifth Annual Meeting in 1996, Bob Ladenson and I agreed that we would have a demonstration of the Ethics Bowl\textsuperscript{SM} competition (which he had developed the year before). We had the first National Ethics Bowl\textsuperscript{SM} the next year, in 1997, and as they say, the rest is history. The activity has grown and developed beyond all expectations, now with 10 Regional Ethics Bowl competitions and over 110 teams all over the country.

The Ethics Bowl\textsuperscript{SM} has proved to be an activity with enormous pedagogical potential for the informal ethics curriculum on campuses. Ladenson has been recognized by the American Philosophical Association for the Ethics Bowl\textsuperscript{SM}, and the Ethics Bowl\textsuperscript{SM} has received national press attention on a variety of occasions.

The National Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl\textsuperscript{SM} has inspired similar competitions as far away as Turkey, and in other disciplines and professional groups such as the Society for American Archaeology. It has inspired at least two books in ethics, using a case-based approach. More recently it has prompted the development of high school ethics bowls, some sponsored by the Association’s recently developed Pre-college Ethics Interest Group with leadership by Roberta Israeloff and the Squire Family Foundation.

The Ethics Bowl\textsuperscript{SM} has been the product of Bob Ladenson’s leadership over the years and now with leadership by Patrick Croskery, but is also a result of an incredible volunteer effort by so many. It has been a true labor of collaboration and love. I salute all those who have given so much to make it successful.

**The GREE Story:**

From 1995-2007, the Association had an NSF funded project: Graduate Research Ethics Education (GREE) to teach research ethics to graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in the physical and natural sciences, engineering and social sciences. The faculty for the first six cohorts included Deborah G. Johnson, Karen M.T. Muskavitch, Michael S. Pritchard, Brian Schrag, P. Aarne Vesilind, and Vivian M. Weil. For a seventh cohort, we added social science faculty in Education, Archaeology, Psychology, Anthropology, and Sociology.
Project Goal:

From the beginning our intention was to make some contribution to changing the culture of science, particularly in how research ethics is perceived, practiced, and taught in the science and engineering community. As ethicists and teachers of research ethics, it was our conviction that this was best done not merely by teaching scientists and engineers a code of ethics or a set of compliance rules to be followed, but by teaching them an understanding of the nature of ethics and ethical reasoning, set in the historical context of research ethics and with the understanding of the centrality of ethics to doing science and engineering.

Selection of Participants:

We selected young scientists and engineers from a variety of fields who showed promise of leadership in their own field as well as an interest in research ethics. There were over 120 participants in the project, from over 60 universities; from Harvard to Berkeley, from the University of Minnesota to the University of Texas. Many of the GREE participants have indeed begun to take a leadership role in research ethics education. Some are already in important government policy positions, some are in the private sector, and others are already faculty, in a position to influence generations of students. This year sixteen GREE participants are at the Annual Meeting presenting on some aspect of research ethics education. Over time, they will be an important influence in shaping research ethics education in this country.

GREE Volumes:

A primary outreach activity of the GREE project has been the distribution of the seven volumes of Research Ethics: Cases and Commentaries, developed as a byproduct of the GREE project. To date, we have distributed approximately 2,000 volumes to 160 universities in the United States and Puerto Rico as well as to 26 universities in a dozen other countries. Many of the cases have been put online at various universities. The first six volumes have been made available on the Online Ethics Center at the National Academy of Engineering.
Responsible Conduct of Research Educational Committee (RCREC):

In the spring of 2006, the organization, Responsible Conduct of Research Educational Consortium, was integrated into the Association and renamed the Responsible Conduct of Research Educational Committee. With early leadership from Michael Kalichman, Frank Macri, Dan Vasgird, and Karen M.T. Muskavitch, the RCREC has organized individual sessions at the Annual Meeting, a Mini Conference and one-day workshops during the Annual Meeting. For two years, an effort was made to put that workshop on the road, with Kalichman and Macri doing workshops at the University of Alaska, the University of Nebraska, and the University of Cincinnati.

At this year’s Annual Meeting we held an RCREC seminar for 100 participants. The idea was to bring together RCREC institutional members and other university administrators charged with research education in the university along with Association ethicists, ethics center directors, GREE alumni, and leaders of the Society for Ethics Across the Curriculum. The aim was to facilitate dialogue between these parties with their collective expertise in order to think about more effective research ethics education. Notice that no other organization in the U.S. is as well positioned as the Association to create that sort of collaboration. Also notice that the work on research ethics education is now the largest driving force behind what has been called the ethics across the curriculum movement.

Other Ethics Education Workshops:

Over the years we have conducted a number of workshops that highlight collaboration across professional boundaries and the emphasis on both ethical scholarship and ethics education, including: a series of one week summer conferences on Professional Ethics first at Colorado College and then in Missoula, Montana, with the generous support of Deni Elliott. (I want to note that being Executive Director of the Association has had many demands. John Arras, who served as one of the faculty members at those conferences, is an ardent fly-fisherman. In order to get him to the conferences, it was my duty each year, after the workshop, to serve as his beater. I would flail the water with my fly-casting and beat all the trout in John’s direction. And I did it well.)

In the early years, for two summers we conducted workshops in collaboration with Stuart Gilman of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics, trying to identify way ethicists might be involved in ethics
education for government employees. In 2002 we received NSF funds to host a workshop on teaching science and engineering ethics online. That led to a special issue in the journal, *Science and Engineering Ethics* on that topic.

In the summer of 2006, the Association sponsored a workshop on Ethics in Higher Education Administration, bringing together ethicists who actually had administrative experience in higher education. That resulted in panel presentations at the Annual Meeting and ultimately in the publication of a book, *The Ethical Challenges of Academic Administration*.  

In 2009, the Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions and the Association received an NSF workshop grant to explore ethical issues in Pervasive and Autonomous Information Technology. Ken Pimple organized the workshop, held at the Annual Meeting, and including computer scientists, psychologists, and ethicists. It has led to the ongoing development of a set of ethical guidelines for work in this area. Some of that work will be shared in a session at the 2011 Annual Meeting.

Finally, in terms of overall accomplishments, we have raised about one million dollars in support of the Association and its projects.

**WHERE ARE WE HEADING?**

I believe that the future is rich with opportunities for the Association. I will leave it to the new Director to provide leadership on that. I will mention only three items.

**Collaboration Between Ethics Centers:**

As I have consulted with ethics centers the past few years I have been encouraging them to think about ways of collaborating with other ethics centers. In some cases there is another center in the same city. In other cases they are nearby, in the same state or are linked by a similar mission. By pooling resources they may be able to achieve things together that they could not do on their own. The new National Center for Professional and Research Ethics at the University of Illinois, directed by Kristina Gunsalus, is an example of that.
Ethics and Organizations:

Over the past twenty years in the Association, we have seen an increasing shift from a preoccupation with practical ethics at the level of individual moral agents/professionals to broader, more complex levels of moral decision-making and behavior in the context of professional organizations and institutions.

Most of us now spend our lives and find our meaning in an organizational environment. Moral decision-making in an institutional setting raises the complexity of the decision-making process and the stakes. How can we structure organizations to support and encourage ethical behavior and decision-making both individually of its members and collectively as an organization? In the last few years we have all witnessed the ethical issues that have arisen in military organizations, religious organizations, academic institutions, and governmental organizations, as well as business organizations.

Ethical issues in the institutional setting necessarily go beyond questions of individual decision-making to shaping the institutional structure and culture. Thinking about such concerns requires the central role of disciplines beyond the traditional ones of those formally trained in ethics.

There has been a temptation, I believe, for practitioners in not-for-profit organizations to look to the literature on business organizations for guidance in shaping the ethical behavior in non-business organizations. As an academic administrator, I was struck by the degree to which upper level academic administrators relied on that literature. For lack of other models, they borrowed the literature on business organizational structure, culture, leadership, behavior. Some scholars assume that the difference in mission between business organizations and not-for-profit organizations is not relevant to shaping the organizational culture and ethical functioning of the not-for-profit organizations such as universities. I am not so sure.

Perhaps we need a fuller account of non-business organizations, type-by-type to help us understand more clearly what might be done to shape their ethical impact on the individuals in them and on the society. Such a fuller account of non-business organizations, including universities, is necessary, I think, to resist their conceptualization in terms of the business organization model. What I have in mind here is exemplified in the work of Seumas Miller in his book, *The Moral Foundations of Social Institutions.* It may also require that we revisit the issue and analysis of the concept of collective moral responsibility. What
better place to address this sort of problem than in our Association, with its cross-disciplinary and cross-professional membership?

Global Outreach:

Finally, I want to briefly mention one other possibility for Association work. As individuals and societies, we are now facing, even more urgently, the challenge of making moral decisions that have a global impact, for example, social policy regarding climate change and its implications for societies. That requires us to be able to engage in dialogue with other societies and cultures and to bridge cultural views of morality. To take one example: How research ethics is practiced in any one country has a significant effect on research ethics and welfare of people in many other countries. There is a need to find common ground on ethical research practice across the world. That effort has already begun.

It is, I believe, time to take the next step as an Association, reaching across societies and cultures. Our membership history and our programming foreshadow this. What might we do? I mentioned earlier the idea of collaboration between ethics centers. But that collaboration could be more ambitious. A number of years ago, I had the idea of pairing a couple of Association ethics centers, one in the United States and one in Asia, to work on the same ethical problem involving a case in environmental ethics. Each center would initially work on their own and then meet to discuss their findings and see how their different cultural and ethical perspectives played out in attempting to solve the ethical issue. It would be a means for helping ethicists from different cultural perspectives to understand each other and to identify how they might find common ethical ground on shared problems, in spite of major differences in ethical perspective. Alas, I was unable to find the funding, but it illustrates the point.

Another possibility would be to strengthen our collaboration with our sister associations in Australia (the Australian Association for Professional and Applied Ethics), Canada (the Canadian Society for the Study of Practical Ethics), as well as emerging organizations in Japan. Over the years I have had conversations with my counterparts in Australia regarding how we could facilitate exchanges between our members and exchanges in programming. We have always been so enriched by the presence of our members from these and other countries at our meetings but we have never been able to provide the financial support to create a significant and sustained formal exchange or
collaboration. It could be very productive to be able to work in systematic collaboration with them.

I would like to close by remarking what a wonderful opportunity it has been for me personally to work with members of the Association to try to bring something into existence that could make a real difference in practical ethics and ethics education. I have always been struck by how collegial our members have been and how willing to help out in that enterprise. It has been such a privilege, and I thank you.

ENDNOTES


7 Henry Sidgwick, “The Scope and Limits of the Work of an Ethical Society,” p. 5


16 Henry Sidgwick, “The Scope and Limits of the Work of an Ethical Society”, p. 21

17 Henry Sidgwick, “The Scope and Limits of the Work of an Ethical Society”, p. 20

18 Henry Sidgwick, “The Scope and Limits of the Work of an Ethical Society”, p. 21

19 Henry Sidgwick, “The Scope and Limits of the Work of an Ethical Society”, p. 22

20 For a very rich discussion on these issues of practical ethics, practical ethics and philosophical reflection and the relation of theory to practice in Sidgwick, Thomas Reid and William Whewell, see: Michael S. Pritchard, “Practical Ethics and Philosophical Reflection”, *Teaching Ethics*, pp 19-46


22 See Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement: Why moral conflict cannot be avoided in politics and what should be done about it*, Harvard University Press, 1996


24 Henry Sidgwick, “The Scope and Limits of the Work of an Ethical Society,” p. 25